

sexual offender records. Less than half the States and the District are into that interim computer system which is eventually going to lead to a permanent system, which caused you to sign—to send a letter to the Governors to get them off the dime.

How do you look at that effort now, when you think that sexual offenders may be falling through the cracks and only half the States are on board?

The President. Well, I think the letter I sent says it all. The truth is that the stakes here are quite high, and we have the ability, through technology, to centralize these records to get the job done. I know it requires some cost and some effort on the part of the States. We're having a similar problem with fewer States in the child support area, trying to centralize records there so we can interconnect the systems. And I know this is difficult, but it has to be done. And if it is done, we can make the country much safer.

So we'll keep pushing them. And I think most of the States, probably all of them, really want to do it. They know it's the right thing to do, and they just need to put somebody on it in each State capital and make it a priority. It can be done.

Legislative Initiatives

Q. Mr. President, there's a Republican proposal to pay for 100,000 new teachers. What do you think of that, and why haven't you proposed that yourself?

The President. Well, I have lots of proposals for the State of the Union that haven't been made yet. You don't know what I'm going to propose.

Q. [Inaudible]—about raising the minimum wage?

The President. What I hope we will be able to do in this session of Congress is to make education a national issue. It would please me if it could be a nonpartisan issue. We fought awfully hard and finally succeeded in getting the Congress to agree that we ought to go forward with national standards and testing to see whether our children are meeting those standards. I hope we can re-energize that movement and do a lot of other things in this coming session of Congress for education reform. And I'm looking forward to it.

I have, some weeks ago, signed off on a very ambitious agenda, only part of which has been revealed. We'll just keep working at it. And then I'll work with the Congress, and, whatever ideas they have, we'll be glad to get together and work with them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Office of National Drug Control Policy Director Barry McCaffrey; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Memorandum on Ending Drug Use and Drug Availability for Offenders *January 12, 1998*

Memorandum for the Attorney General

Subject: Zero Tolerance for Drug Use and Drug Availability for Offenders

Crime rates in this country have dropped significantly for 5 years, and the number of Americans who have used drugs is down nearly 50 percent from its peak 15 years ago. Also, drug-related murders have dropped to their lowest point in a decade, and recent drug use surveys indicate that—for the first time in years—teen drug use is leveling off, and in some instances, modestly decreasing. All of this news is encouraging.

Nonetheless, much more can and needs to be done to continue to bring down drug use and increase public safety. With more than half the offenders in our criminal justice system estimated to have a substance abuse problem, enforcing coerced abstinence within the criminal justice system is critical to breaking the cycle of crime and drugs. My Administration consistently has promoted testing offenders and requiring treatment as a means of reducing recidivism and drug-related crime. We have worked to expand the number of Drug Courts throughout the country, increase the number of Federal arrestees and prisoners who are tested and treated for drugs, and launched an innovative "Breaking the Cycle" initiative, which is a rigorous program of testing, treatment, supervision, and sanctions for offenders at all stages of the criminal justice process. And under your leadership, the Federal Bureau of Prisons provides models of excellence in

drug detection, inmate testing, and drug treatment.

We can do still more to enforce coerced abstinence among State prisoners, probationers, and parolees. When a drug user ends up in a State prison, we have a chance to break his or her addiction. Convicted offenders who undergo drug testing and treatment while incarcerated and after release are approximately twice as likely to stay drug- and crime-free as those offenders who do not receive testing and treatment. But when drug use inside prisons is ignored, the demand for drugs runs high. In this environment, correction officials struggle to keep their prisons drug-free. Often drugs are smuggled in by visitors; sometimes even by compromised correctional staff.

To maintain order in our prisons, to make effective treatment possible, and to reduce drug-related crime, we cannot tolerate drug use and trafficking within the Nation's prisons. Thus, I direct you to:

- (1) Amend the guidelines requiring States receiving Federal prison construction grants to submit plans for drug testing, intervention, and treatment to include a requirement that States also submit a baseline report of their prison drug abuse problem. In every subsequent year, States will be required to update and expand this information in order to measure the progress they are making towards ridding their correctional facilities of drugs and reducing drug use among offenders under criminal justice supervision.
- (2) Draft and transmit to the Congress legislation that will permit States to use their Federal prison construction and substance abuse treatment funds to provide a full range of drug testing, drug treatment, and sanctions for offenders under criminal justice supervision.
- (3) In consultation with States, draft and transmit to the Congress legislation that requires States to enact stiffer penalties for drug trafficking into and within correctional facilities.

William J. Clinton

Remarks in an Outreach Meeting on the Race Initiative

January 12, 1998

The President. Well, welcome. I'm glad to see all of you, and I thank you for coming in, some of you from a very great distance. I will be very brief. We're about 6 months into this effort, and I think we've gotten quite a bit done, and we've certainly generated a fair amount of controversy. And we're hoping for a good next 6 months. We've got a very ambitious schedule laid out. But we thought it would be quite helpful to bring a group in and just listen to you talk about where you think we are with the issue, what you think still needs to be done, what this Advisory Board and our project can and cannot reasonably expect to do within this year. And maybe we can talk about some of the things that we expect to be in the budget and some other issues.

But I'll say more as we go along through the meeting, but I'd rather take the maximum amount of time to be listening to you. And maybe we could just start with Wade.

Wade Henderson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Nice tie.

[Wade Henderson, executive director, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, thanked the President for his initiative, noted that a challenge to affirmative action may appear on the November ballot in the State of Washington, and asked for the President's leadership to oppose it. He then urged a commitment to vigorous enforcement of existing civil rights laws, including a Federal zero-tolerance policy on discrimination and increased funding; suggested that the President direct the attention of business leaders toward addressing the growing gap in terms of the benefits of the Nation's robust economy between the haves and the have-nots; and suggested the creation of incentives to attract bright, committed, dedicated professionals to the teaching profession in order to ensure that more high-quality instruction is made available in both inner-city and rural school systems.]

The President. I agree with that. Let me say on the first, on the discrimination, just